

Truth and Reconciliation Report

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Watching the videos with Dr. Marie Wilson and the testimonials of survivors brought back many memories of things we have heard and learned from First Nations people throughout our years of ministry with NAIM. At Tillicum Native Centre we listened to many people share the painful experiences they had in residential schools in the early 1990's, before the last residential school closed in Canada. It was not even being talked about in the general public at that time. The abuses that happened in the schools were atrocious and were especially horrific because they were done in the name of Christ. Our hearts are broken for those who suffered so greatly under this government sanctioned attempt to extinguish a people group in our own country. The attempt to "take the Indian out of the child" was cultural genocide. The notion that First Nations people were "uncivilized" or "savages" demonstrated a complete lack of respect for their history and value as a human being. Whenever people try to force others to be like them, they pass on the worst characteristics of their race. The result is anger, frustration, abuses, brutality, and destruction.

My heart aches for what was done, and it is our privilege and responsibility to work to bring healing in the relationships we are involved in. We must listen to our First Nations friends, and hear their hurts and pains, as well as their hopes and dreams. We should always look for ways to speak words of encouragement, building them up, as Paul wrote to the Ephesians. (4:29) We need to extend the apology that was given by Prime Minister Stephen Harper, and actively seek ways to reconcile individuals and groups of people with one another. We need to help educate Non-First Nations people who do not feel responsible for what happened "over a hundred years ago" and help them understand the impact that the actions of our ancestors had on First Nations people today. Education, employment, health, and family are all impacted in negative ways. We can be a voice that can make a difference in the way society responds to First Nations people who live near them. Overcoming prejudice has to come from understanding and caring about another group of people.

I believe it is only as we represent the God of the Bible to First Nations people without judgment on their culture and worldview that they will see that He is the One who is their Creator and that his sacrifice on the cross was for them as well as for all people. He alone is the healer of the brokenhearted and the champion of the oppressed.